Sheron Lin – President, Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan



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Sheron Lin, president of Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan, elaborates on the affiliate's tactical positioning in the region and a leading market for clinical trials and new product launches. Lin goes on to share her strategic priorities in carrying out the Japanese company's global 2025 vision of transforming into an innovative oncology player.

Please introduce the affiliate and yourself to our international readers.

Daiichi Sankyo as it is today has been in Taiwan since Daiichi and Sankyo merged in 2007. Before that, both companies had a long history in Taiwan of more than 50 years each. After the merge, our products now are primarily in the therapeutic area of cardiovascular and antibiotics, but in the future, by 2025 the affiliate aims to keep pace with Daiichi Sankyo's global strategy and expand into oncology.

I personally took over the presidency of the affiliate in 2013, and up to 2018, our growth has been 65 percent since 2012. Although we did not have many new drugs entering the market, the entire team worked hard to ensure the success of Daiichi Sankyo in Taiwan.

What is the strategic significance of Taiwan to Daiichi Sankyo's global and regional operations?

Overall, Taiwan accounts for only a small percentage of Daiichi Sankyo's international sales. However, in terms of the ASCA (Asia South and Central America) region, Taiwan is the leading market for clinical trials. Compared to China, Taiwan also has a much better market access condition and we often launch new products earlier. This puts the affiliate in a unique position in which we can share our experiences and support China in bringing global products to the market.

Even though Taiwan is still small, even in ASCA, the affiliate works hard to maintain sales in the market. Regardless of scale, it is my mission to ensure Taiwan remains a profitable market and contributes to Daiichi Sankyo's overall growth.

As president of the affiliate, how do you advocate for more resources to be invested into Taiwan?

When we know a new product will be introduced either globally or locally, Taiwan is always one of the first to volunteer as a first-launch market. For example, we are participating in several of the company's global and regional trials. Taiwan's connectivity, patient pool, and quality research environment are major assets to the affiliate in this regard. In the affiliate, we are increasing our clinical research and regulatory affairs capabilities to help speed up the implementation of new Daiichi Sankyo products globally.

Although we face the challenge of yearly price cuts from Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI), everyone in the affiliate is committed to maintaining revenue so that we can continue investing into future projects, ultimately bringing the most impactful health solutions to Taiwanese patients.

Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in Taiwan. How is Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan attempting to meet this considerable need for quality, and affordable cardiovascular medicines in the Taiwanese market?

At the local level, we try to ensure that our portfolio is comprehensive and complete so that patients can have access to the best treatments available. For example, in cardiovascular we have lipid-lowering, BP-lowering, and antithrombotic agents that are crucial in improving patient health. Our local portfolio also includes edoxaban (Lixiana®), a key global product for Daiichi Sankyo. Based on the two global phase 3 studies, ENGAGE AF-TIMI 48 proved that edoxaban is effective for the prevention of stroke or systematic embolic events in patients with atrial fibrillation and HOKUSAI VTE study proved the efficacy of edoxaban in VTE treatment.

As you can see, Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan has a strong commitment to bringing our most innovative products to the market so that local patients can have a more complete treatment.

How is Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan performing against competitors in the Taiwanese pharma market?

Edoxaban was the last anticoagulant launching in Taiwan about three years ago but has already exceeded apixaban and nearly caught up with dabigatran. Although Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan is not a heavyweight big pharma, we can still demonstrate the competitiveness.

The business environment is rapidly changing within the pharmaceutical industry, and Daiichi Sankyo's president and CEO Sunao Manabe is working to realize the company's 2025 vision to become a global pharma innovator in oncology. What is your strategy for realizing this transformation at the local level?

In Taiwan, pricing is a major challenge as we face cuts each year from the country's NHI. In fact, other than Lixiana® and Efient®, many of our products face fierce competition from generic drugs. Therefore, bringing new products to the market is essential for the affiliate's strategy, which of course includes oncology. Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan has an excellent team of professionals and we are constantly working to prove to our global headquarters that new products and developing pipelines should continue to be brought to Taiwan as a first-launch and clinical trial market. Our ambitions to always build a stronger team is a vital factor in maintaining this positioning.

In Taiwan's pharmaceutical market, nearly all the companies ahead of Daiichi Sankyo in market share have oncology products. Although we are a newcomer to oncology and do not have perfect knowledge of the area, my strategy is to recruit the best talent from not only Taiwan local companies but also Taiwan's multinational companies who can bring their know-how to our company. We already have several team members with this experience in different fields such as marketing, regulatory, and business development. These people play an important role in facilitating our transition into the therapeutic area so that Daiichi Sankyo can become an integrated oncology player in no time. Therefore, it is my priority to ensure that Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan has an excellent working environment which will help attract top talent.

Another tactic we are implementing is to work closely with oncology experts and key opinion leaders to better understand the unmet needs of patients and physicians. This is a vital factor in

ensuring that Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan can develop the best oncology pipeline in the future. Having this feedback is also crucial for us to be aware of how we are viewed by physicians as we make this transition to cancer.

How would you describe your own leadership style when it comes to talent development?

As president of the affiliate, I believe strongly in creating a stable relationship of trust with my team. I often delegate responsibilities to my management team as I realize the competencies they have in their particular roles. Keeping an open platform of communication where we can share ideas and discuss operations at all level of the affiliate is an important factor of success for the affiliate. Despite the challenges we face, the cohesiveness of our team will lead us to success. Over the past six years, I have been continuously learning and I see that there are many talented professionals on my team from whom I can also learn.

What is your vision for Daiichi Sankyo Taiwan looking into the future?

As of today, a very large percentage of our sales come from the cardiovascular area, about 70 percent. In the future, we want to be closely aligned with the most prevalent disease trends. Therefore, we will put more effort in adding new products to our portfolio in the special areas focus on oncology business. Looking at the world’s leading causes of death, we will continue to work towards bringing Taiwan’s patients the most complete treatment solutions.

On the other hand, starting in 2014, we have grandly been increasing our investments in several Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. Aside from helping to support elderly care centres and geriatric homes, we have initiated a program to invite HCPs (health care professionals) to give disease education to the public and spread health awareness. Our mission is to get more Taiwanese people involved in their own health and wellness. Additionally, in order to support the development of local healthcare talent, we continuously run an internship program for pharmacy students to let them understand more about how Daiichi Sankyo contributes to patients through different functions, such as clinical or commercial.

In Taiwan, we are very conscious of the behavior we have to be compliant with our global vision while also giving back to Taiwan’s society so that the health of its people also remains at our core.

As someone with over 25 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry, what motivates you personally on your career journey?

I am very grateful that I came into this organization in the early days of my career. I have always been working in marketing which is a very diverse and dynamic field. By managing products, I could not only help impact the lives of patients but also meet other health stakeholders who are passionate about healthcare. Before my time in Daiichi Sankyo is over, I want to create a joyous company where people can come together for mutual learning and development as they pursue the common goal of creating a healthier society.

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